

§ 251.99

36 CFR Ch. II (7–1–03 Edition)

(f) In appeals involving initial decisions of the Chief (§251.87(a)), the establishment of an administrative record as defined in paragraph (a) of this section shall not begin unless the Secretary elects to review the appeal. Except for the initial notice of appeal, any filings made previous to the Secretary's election to review will not be accepted.

[54 FR 3362, Jan. 23, 1989, as amended at 54 FR 34510, Aug. 21, 1989]

§ 251.99 Appeal decision.

(a) The Reviewing Officer shall base the appeal decision on the appeal record and applicable laws, regulations, orders, policies, and procedures.

(b) The Reviewing Officer shall affirm or reverse the original decision whole or in part and include the reason(s) for the decision. The Reviewing Officer may also include in the appeal decision instructions for further action by the Deciding Officer.

(c) At the first level of appeal, the Reviewing Officer shall make and issue an appeal decision within 30 days of the date the record is closed.

(d) At the second level of appeal provided in §251.87(c), the Reviewing Officer shall make and issue an appeal decision within 30 days of the date the record is received from the first level Reviewing Officer.

(e) The Reviewing Officer shall send a copy of all appeal decisions to all participants.

(f) Unless the next higher officer exercises the discretion to review an appeal decision as provided in §§251.87(e) and 251.100 of this subpart, the appeal decision is the final administrative decision of the Department of Agriculture and is not subject to further review under this subpart or part 217 of this chapter.

[54 FR 3362, Jan. 23, 1989, as amended at 54 FR 34510, Aug. 21, 1989]

§ 251.100 Discretionary review.

(a) Petitions or requests for discretionary review shall not, in and of themselves, give rise to a decision to exercise discretionary review. In electing to exercise discretion, a Reviewing Officer should consider, but is not limited to, such factors as controversy

surrounding the decision, the potential for litigation, and whether the appeal decision is precedential in nature or establishes new policy.

(b) As provided for in §§251.87(d) and (e), 251.91(k), and 251.92, stay decisions rendered by a Forest Supervisor, certain dismissal decisions rendered by Forest Service line officers, and first-level appeal decisions rendered by Regional Foresters and the Chief (§251.99), are subject to discretionary review at the next highest administrative level. Within one day following the date of a decision subject to such discretionary review, the Reviewing Officer shall forward a copy of the decision and the initial decision upon which the appeal is predicated to the next higher officer.

(c) The next higher level officer shall have 15 calendar days from date of receipt to decide whether or not to review an appeal decision and may call for or use the appeal record in deciding whether or not to review the appeal decision. If the record is requested, the 15-day period is suspended at that point. The lower level Reviewing Officer shall forward it within 5 days of the request. Upon receipt, the higher level officer shall have 15 days to decide whether or not to review the lower level decision. If that officer takes no action by the expiration of the discretionary review period, appellants shall be notified by the discretionary level officer that the appeal decision of the Reviewing Officer stands as the final administrative review decision of the Department of Agriculture.

(d) When an official exercises the discretion in §251.87(d) or §251.87(e) of this subpart to review a dismissal or appeal decision, the discretionary review shall be made on the existing appeal record and the lower level Reviewing Officer's appeal decision. The record shall not be reopened to accept additional submissions from any source, including the Reviewing Officer whose appeal decision is being reviewed.

(e) When an official exercises discretion to review an appeal decision, a Reviewing Officer may extend a stay, in whole or in part, during pendency of the discretionary review.

(f) The second level Reviewing Officer shall conclude the review within 30 days of the date of notice issued to an

appellant that the lower level decision will be reviewed.

(g) If a discretionary review decision is not issued by the end of the 30-day review period, appellants and intervenors shall be deemed to have exhausted their administrative remedies for purposes of judicial review. In such case, appellants, intervenors, and the lower level Reviewing Officer shall be notified by the discretionary level officer.

(h) The Reviewing Officer shall provide a copy of the decision to all appellants, intervenors, the Deciding Officer, and the lower level Reviewing Officer.

[54 FR 3362, Jan. 23, 1989, as amended at 54 FR 34510, Aug. 21, 1989; 55 FR 7896, Mar. 6, 1990]

§ 251.101 Policy in event of judicial proceedings.

It is the position of the Department of Agriculture that any filing for Federal judicial review of and relief from a decision appealable under this subpart is premature and inappropriate, unless the appellant has first sought to resolve the dispute by invoking and exhausting the procedures of this subpart. This position may be waived only upon a written finding by the Chief.

§ 251.102 Applicability and effective date.

(a) Except where applicants or holders elect the decision review procedures of part 217 of this chapter, appealable decisions arising from the issuance, approval, and administration of written instruments authorizing occupancy and use of National Forest System lands made on or after February 22, 1989, shall be subject to the procedures of this part.

(b) Decisions made before February 22, 1989, arising from the issuance, approval, and administration of written instruments authorizing occupancy and use of National Forest System lands shall be subject to appeal under the provisions of 36 CFR 211.18.

[54 FR 6892, Feb. 15, 1989]

§ 251.103 Mediation of term grazing permit disputes.

(a) *Decisions subject to mediation.* In those States with Department of Agriculture certified mediation programs,

any holder of a term grazing permit may request mediation, if a Deciding Officer issues a decision to suspend or cancel a term grazing permit, in whole or in part, as authorized by 36 CFR 222.4 (a)(2)(i), (ii), (iv), (v), and (a)(3) through (a)(6).

(b) *Parties.* Notwithstanding the provisions addressing parties to an appeal at § 251.86, only the following may participate in mediation of term grazing permit disputes under this section:

(1) A mediator authorized to mediate under a Department of Agriculture State certified mediation program:

(2) The Deciding Officer who made the decision being mediated, or designee;

(3) The holder whose term grazing permit is the subject of the Deciding Officer's decision and who has requested mediation in the notice of appeal;

(4) The holder's creditors, if applicable; and

(5) Legal counsel, if applicable. The Forest Service will have legal counsel participate only if the permittee choose to have legal counsel.

(c) *Timeframe.* When an appellant simultaneously requests mediation at the time an appeal is filed (§ 251.84), the Reviewing Officer shall immediately notify, by certified mail, all parties to the appeal that, in order to allow for mediation, the appeal is suspended for 45 calendar days from the date of the Reviewing Officer's notice. If agreement has not been reached at the end of 45 calendar days, but it appears to the Deciding Officer that a mediated agreement may soon be reached, the Reviewing Officer may notify, by certified mail, all parties to the appeal that the period for mediation is extended for a period of up to 15 calendar days from the end of the 45-day appeal suspension period. If a mediated agreement cannot be reached under the specified timeframes, the Reviewing Officer shall immediately notify, by certified mail, all parties to the appeal that mediation was unsuccessful, that the stay granted during mediation is lifted, and that the timeframes and procedures applicable to an appeal (§ 251.89) are reinstated as of the date of such notice.

(d) *Confidentiality.* Mediation sessions shall be confidential; moreover, dispute